



DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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SPOT COMMENTARY

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IRAQ-KUWAIT: SITUATION REPORT #597

Political Developments

Iraq Responds to the US Ultimatum

An Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) spokesman today denounced President Bush's call for Iraq to begin withdrawing from Kuwait by noon tomorrow. Reading a harshly worded statement, the spokesman called the President "the enemy of God and the Devil's friend" and reiterated accusations that the US is targeting civilians and places of worship. The spokesman stressed Iraq's "desire for peace" and its cooperation on the Soviet initiative, which an official Soviet spokesman further elaborated yesterday. The RCC spokesman also called the President's comments on the destruction in Kuwait "useless" and said the UN Security Council should nominate a committee to investigate the "true source" of the destruction in Iraq and Kuwait.

Comment: The primary aim of the RCC statement--as in Saddam's speech Thursday--is to seize the political and moral high ground by making the US appear hostile to negotiations and determined to destroy Iraq. The Iraqi leadership also probably hopes the statement will rally public opinion in the Arab world.

Allies Support US Stand

Worldwide reaction so far to President Bush's statement has been favorable:

- o A spokesman for the Western European Union--a regional group consisting of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Luxembourg--announced a "perfect identity of view" today with the President's ultimatum. Canada, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Japan, and Denmark also supported the President in official public statements.

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- o Chinese and Soviet press have reported the President's ultimatum without comment. A Chinese government spokesman announced earlier that Beijing welcomed Iraq's willingness to work with the Soviet peace plan.

Belgium Donates Money to British and French War Efforts

Belgium agreed today to donate an unspecified amount of financial aid to British and French military efforts in the Gulf, according to press reports. The Belgian Government's announcement reportedly follows a request from London and Paris for military equipment or money. reporting, Belgium is also sending a frigate and two minesweepers into the Persian Gulf, in response to a WEU request. Belgian military leaders reportedly are embarrassed by their limited role in coalition war efforts, and see direct requests for assistance--like those of the British, French, and WEU--as the only way to push Brussels into action.

Comment: These developments probably are a result of the Belgian Government's discomfiture following criticism at home and in Britain for refusing London's request for artillery shells last December. Earlier this month, the Belgian Prime Minister said the refusal had been a mistake. The Belgian flotilla was previously not permitted to operate in Gulf waters and will continue to be prohibited from nearing Kuwaiti waters.

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